

Congress of the United States Washington, DC 20515

April 11, 2022

The Honorable Diane Gutierrez-Scaccetti
Chair, NJ TRANSIT Board of Directors
Commissioner, New Jersey Department of Transportation
1 Penn Plaza East
Newark, New Jersey 07105

Dear Commissioner Gutierrez-Scaccetti and Members of the Board:

The Lackawanna Cut-Off restoration project will benefit thousands across North Jersey, returning long-needed commuter rail service to commuters from Port Morris Junction to Andover. The project will greatly improve convenience and travel times for Sussex and Warren County residents. It will also provide transportation capacity to support population and employment growth in the region. Critically, the project serves as a key component of Amtrak's broader plan to expand service across northwestern New Jersey to Scranton, Pennsylvania, bringing significant economic opportunity to the region. Given these benefits, we urge the NJ TRANSIT Board to expeditiously authorize the final design, construction, and commissioning of the Roseville Tunnel rehabilitation and associated track bed work.

We are decades overdue for a passenger railway system that joins New York City to Scranton, Pennsylvania — connecting key areas of North Jersey along the way. Studies have shown that 28,000 people commute daily between Northeast Pennsylvania and the Northern New Jersey/New York Metro area.¹ The restoration project has long received bipartisan support at the local, state, and federal levels. Former Congressman Rodney Frelinghuysen secured initial funding for the project, and in New Jersey, Senator Steve Oroho and Assemblymen Hal Wirths and Parker Space have fought diligently for the project over the last decade.² Moreover, the project was a key motivator behind the work of Congressman Josh Gottheimer, Congressman Tom Malinowski, and Congresswoman Mikie Sherrill to pass the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill last November.³ Yet, despite the clear need and long-standing support for the project, restoring the Roseville Tunnel in Sussex County, part of Phase One of the Lackawanna Cut-Off restoration project, has been subject to repeated delays and uncertain timetables, with regulatory hurdles, red tape, property disputes, and inter-agency negotiations over the last 15 years.

These delays are regrettable, given that Amtrak's Corridor Vision plan, released in May 2021, prioritizes service expansion beyond the Lackawanna Cut-Off to Scranton, Pennsylvania. Such an expansion is estimated to generate \$87 million in annual economic activity, plus \$2.9 billion from one-time economic impact from construction along the corridor.⁴ Amtrak's Corridor Vision plan comes amid the Biden Administration's broader push to modernize American public

¹ Train to NYC? NEPA advocates hopeful as funding remains top question, POCONO RECORD (June 15, 2021), available at <https://www.pocorecord.com/story/news/local/2021/06/14/train-poconos-new-york-feasible-amtrak-infrastructure-bill-joe-biden/7635535002/>.

² Kanjorski earmarked \$3.2 million for Monroe County, POCONO RECORD (March 29, 2010), available at <https://www.pocorecord.com/story/news/2010/03/29/kanjorski-earmarked-3-2-million/51657655007/>.

³ Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, Pub. L. No. 117-58.

⁴ NYC-to-Scranton Amtrak service would spur big economic boost to region, study says, NJ.com (Aug. 23, 2021), available at https://www.nj.com/news/2021/08/nyc-to-scranton-amtrak-service-would-spur-big-economic-boost-to-region-study-says.html?_sp=6e70b8c4-e079-4753-86ff-740f5af6cc0a.1649438831629.

transportation, with a particular focus on expanding commuter rail service between New York City and Scranton, Pennsylvania. Public entities already own the relevant rights-of-way between New York City and Scranton, a significant advantage for the project relative to other planned expansions around the nation. It is a rare moment with critical investment locked in and publicly-owned land. Bureaucratic delay and slow-walking should not stand in the way — yet again — of our advancement toward this vision.

Moreover, there have never been more resources available for public transportation improvement in New Jersey. The historic Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill will deliver critical federal investment to New Jersey. Specifically, New Jersey will claw back about \$4.5 billion over five years to improve public transportation options — a 37 percent increase in the first year compared to previous transit funding levels.⁵ In addition, the \$22 billion in new investment for Amtrak included in the bill can be used to support Amtrak's proposed service expansion into northwest Pennsylvania.⁶ This investment can be used for future phases of the Lackawanna Cut-Off restoration project.

Completing Phase One and restoring the Roseville Tunnel is key to finally having quality, expansive rail service in the region. For Jersey to compete, to attract families and businesses, and for America to win in the global marketplace, we must significantly improve our rail service offerings. We must restore the Roseville Tunnel, complete Phase One of the project connecting Port Morris Junction to Andover, use Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill investment to extend service west of Andover to the Delaware River, and also utilize this historic investment to expand service to Scranton, Pennsylvania.

With the bids for the Roseville Tunnel and associated track bed work submitted and momentum on our side, we strongly urge you to award this contract as soon as possible. Doing so will bring significant benefits to the region's residents. We have historic investment available for public transportation in New Jersey and across the country. Now is the time to move forward. Thank you for your time and efforts on this project and your ongoing commitment to public transportation in New Jersey. We look forward to working with you in the coming months to fully implement the new Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill and move this project forward.

Sincerely,



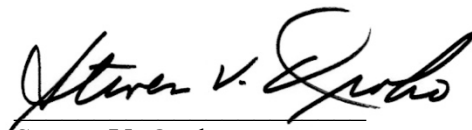
Josh Gottheimer
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Tom Malinowski
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Mikie Sherrill
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Steven V. Oroho
MEMBER OF NEW JERSEY SENATE

⁵ The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Will Deliver for New Jersey, U.S. Department of Transportation, available at https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2022-01/BIL_New_Jersey.pdf.

⁶ UPDATED FACT SHEET: Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, White House Briefing Room, available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/08/02/updated-fact-sheet-bipartisan-infrastructure-investment-and-jobs-act/>.